



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Rep. John Katko (R-NY) Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Security

“Innovation at TSA: Examining Threat Mitigation Through Technology Acquisitions Reform”

January 18, 2018

Remarks as Prepared

The Subcommittee is meeting today to discuss how TSA is working to mitigate threats to transportation security through reforming the agency’s broken acquisitions system.

In particular, the Subcommittee will examine TSA’s statutorily required five-year investment plan that was recently submitted to Congress, as well as the agency’s Innovation Task Force and overall procurement practices. I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

During my tenure as Chairman of this Subcommittee, I have watched the threat environment grow ever more startling. I, along with my colleagues on the Committee, have been continuously briefed on changing security threats and TSA’s threat mitigation efforts.

Unfortunately, TSA continues to be plagued by a reactive—rather than proactive—posture when it comes to technology development and deployment.

While terrorists continue to develop better ways to try and defeat our security screening, TSA struggles to quickly and effectively deploy cutting edge technology to the front lines. This has been a constant oversight issue for this Subcommittee, due to a lack of serious change within the agency.

My predecessor on this Subcommittee, Congressman Hudson, passed the legislation in the 113th Congress requiring TSA to submit the five-year investment plan—a legacy we have sought to build upon by introducing legislation to make the plan annual rather than biannual.

Recently, while reviewing the history of this Subcommittee’s oversight on this topic, I came across a question stemming from a hearing in June of 2012 asking why Credential Authentication Technology had been delayed for a third time. As we sit here today, this technology still has yet to be deployed at airports.

Bureaucratic bottlenecks and understaffing at the TSA Systems Integration Facility, or TSIF, have led to years of delays for technologies that other countries have been using in their airports for quite some time.

On a recent bipartisan Congressional Delegation to airports in the Middle East and Europe, my colleagues and I were amazed at the level of advanced security equipment utilized by several nations to screen both aviation passengers and employees.

Specifically at Schiphol airport in Amsterdam, screening checkpoints utilize advanced Computed Tomography Systems—or CT—which offer screeners better picture quality and more advanced threat detection capabilities.

While Schiphol was able to deploy these technologies in a matter of months, TSA continues to be bogged down in a lengthy process for testing systems and developing algorithms.

In TSA's own five-year investment plan, which was submitted to Congress nearly six months after the statutory deadline, the agency states it only plans to procure two CT systems a year for the next three fiscal years. However, the same plan estimates it would need well over 2,000 CT machines and \$224 million for full deployment.

While TSA has indicated to the Committee it intends to procure and deploy more CT machines, all estimates still fall woefully short of what is needed. With 435 airports in the United States, goals and requests for CT machines should be measures in the hundreds or thousands rather than single digits.

The good news is this, Mr. Pekoske: You, in your new role as Administrator of TSA, have the opportunity to use the \$7.4 billion budget Congress has provided you to fix this broken system and give the American people the type of security they demand and deserve for their tax-dollars.

Additionally, this Subcommittee stands ready to work in a bipartisan manner to help you accomplish this monumental task through oversight and legislation. In order to be successful, however, we need TSA to come to the table with honest answers, real solutions, and with a sense of genuine partnership.

I look forward to hearing your vision for reforming the TSA acquisitions process and how Congress can help.

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